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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000244

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: TFGV01: LANSANA KOUYATE: GUINEA'S NEW PRIME  
MINISTER

REF: CONAKRY 238 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: PolOff Jessica Davis Ba, Reason 1.4 (b,d)

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Conte Names New Prime Minister  
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11. (SBU) On February 26, President Lansana Conte named Lansana Kouyate as Guinea's new Prime Minister. The announcement on the evening news was met by cheers in the streets and spontaneous celebrations in neighborhoods throughout the country. The decree stated that former Prime Minister Eugene Camara was "called to other functions." Kouyate will arrive in Guinea today and begin the first of many difficult tasks ahead: assembling his new cabinet.

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Biographical Information  
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12. (C) Lansana Kouyate was born in Koba, a town about 200 km from Conakry in the Lower Guinea Region. His official bio states his year of birth as 1950, although some contacts have suggested he is several years older. Kouyate's mother is a Soussou from Conte's village; his father is a Malinke of the lower griot caste. Kouyate is a respected diplomat and technocrat with significant international experience. He has not worked in Guinea however, for more than 20 years. He has been tapped before to serve as Prime Minister but has always rejected the offer. We understand Kouyate's acceptance of the Prime Minister position this time was predicated on his designation as Head of Government.

13. (U) Prior to his appointment, Kouyate was the Special Representative of "la Francophonie," working on elections and transparency issues from Abidjan. Previously, he served as ECOWAS Executive Secretary from 1997 until Chambas assumed this position in 2002. Kouyate was U.N. Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs focusing on West African issues between 1994 and 1997. He has also been Vice President of the U.N. Economic and Social Council and was U.N. special representative on Somalia from 1993 to 1994. A career diplomat since 1985, Kouyate was Guinea's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York in 1992-93 and also served as Guinea's ambassador to Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

14. (U) Kouyate studied at the National School of Administration at the University of Conakry and began his career in the mid 1970s in various mid-level administrative positions within the government. Between 1982 and 1983, Kouyate was appointed Vice Director General of an

agricultural development project financed by USAID, the African Development Bank, and the UN Fund for Agricultural Development. Kouyate is the author of two books, "International Financing for State Enterprises in Guinea; Problems and Perspectives" and "The End of the Cold War and its Impact on Third World Countries." He is married and has three children.

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Comment  
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15. (C) Kouyate's diplomatic skills and high-level international contacts and experience will stand him in good stead on the technical front as he faces Guinea's economic and structural problems. The larger challenges will be political, however. Authoritarian regimes do not die easily. Members of old regime have made no pronouncements since last Friday. They must be licking their wounds; we fear they are also planning their revenge/come-back. Kouyate's immediate challenge is to form a viable government of broad national consensus. If the new government is too open to newcomers, then the hard-liners will surge against it. If it is not open enough to newcomers, then the people will return to the street. This will be a delicate balancing act for Kouyate.

16. (C) To bring Guinea within reach of a healthier financial future, Kouyate will have to implement steps likely to be unpopular, to say the least, with the very population who have jubilantly greeted his appointment today. Moreover, as a lower-caste individual with family ties to Conte and no recent experience negotiating a tricky clan-based terrain, Kouyate offers several pressure points to those who like the old ways best. All will be trying to get their men (or

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women) into positions of influence without regard for Guinea's best interests. And many will have direct access to Conte, the real locus of Guinea's plight and the man who can still stop Kouyate with a couple of words: "You're fired."  
MCDONALD